

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a residential school that accommodates young people aged eight to 17 years who have complex needs and severe learning difficulties, including autism. As a school providing over 295 days of residential care per year the whole school is registered as a Children's Home. It is situated in a rural village approximately five miles away from the local town centre.

Summary

This was a full inspection to check on all key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people. This is a good service with some outstanding features. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and their good health is very well promoted. Complaints are well handled. Risk assessments are good. There are good child protection procedures which help to safeguard the welfare of the young people. Behaviour management planning and practice is good. Fire safety is good. Education and leisure needs are very well met and the home works closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Placement planning is excellent and placement plans are very well recorded and reviewed. Staffing is sufficient and they are experienced and competent. Staff induction and training is very good. There is good monitoring of the standard of safety and care provided in the home. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person was asked to ensure that improvements were made in behaviour management practices, NVQ training and the monitoring of the standard of care provided in the home.

Behaviour management policies and practices have been robustly addressed and revised to ensure that no measure of control is excessive or unreasonable. Staff confirm that they have been supported through this process with additional supervision and training. The additional training includes Therapeutic Crisis Intervention which 'supports staff to respond to both the feelings and behaviour of the young people'. There is ongoing monitoring of behaviour management practices which includes opportunities for staff to be reflective. The records have also been revised to include more details of the differing incremental techniques employed before the last resort of physical restraint is used. Staff are supported by the provision of clearly recorded behaviour management plans. These plans are intensively reviewed by a multi disciplinary team who offer well designed, progressive strategies for staff to implement. Overall there is clear evidence of improved outcomes for the young people concerned.

The provider undertakes monthly, unannounced monitoring visits to the home. This is to ensure that the care of children can be adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Additional visits take place that concentrate on the quality of safeguarding young people's welfare. Action points are identified to be followed up by the manager. The manager has maintained a system for improving the quality of care provided in the home. Therefore there is good, effective monitoring of the welfare and safety of the young people in the home.

The service continues to provide facilities and opportunities for staff to achieve a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. However, the target of 80% remains unmet.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

A care support team assists the staff in menu development and promoting healthy nutritional food. The 'eatwell plate' and the 'five a day' model are used to support this. The menu planning takes account of individual young people's likes, dislikes, religious and cultural preferences. Freshly prepared food is provided for young people at a time that is preferable to the individual young person. Staff educate and encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. This is echoed throughout the home and school in a variety of ways. The staff have a good understanding of food hygiene. Any food matters that arise out of diversity, such as allergies, intolerance or cultural preference are particularly well managed. This is a notable area of strength.

Young people are involved in planning meals and shopping. They have access to a well equipped kitchen where they can prepare drinks, meals and snacks for themselves. Individual learning opportunities reflecting care plan targets around food are planned and supported on a regular basis. Therefore, young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They also have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals.

Health promotion is a high priority at the home. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is very good. There is detailed written guidance for staff on a wide range of young people's health and medical matters to make sure that they understand about young people's health and what their responsibilities are. Staff are trained in healthcare subjects. Healthcare records are up to date and accurate, enabling staff to change their ways of working or inform health professionals and parents of the children's health progress.

Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate. A sensory integration therapist provides some young people with foundation support for more complex learning and behaviour. The home has links with a wide variety of specialist health services and there is much evidence of these being used to meet individual young people's needs. The principles of the Mental Capacity Act have been used to improve care plans and ensure that young people are treated as able to make their own decisions unless it is shown that they cannot.

An activities coordinator is employed to plan, develop and deliver a programme of events that encourage individual interests in play and healthy activities. Examples highlighted include a Trampoline Club, dance, Scouts group, use of computers, hydro pool, arts and crafts. A number of themed events have taken place and live music bands are particularly popular with the young people. Some young people are registered on formal Youth Achievement Award schemes which include healthy activities and learning opportunities. Achievements are externally verified and certificated. Young people's involvement in activities is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. Therefore, young people's health needs are identified and services provided to meet the young people's needs and good health is promoted. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Staff are trained in medication matters to enable them to safely store, administer and record the medication that they are responsible for. Medication is securely stored and records are up to date and accurate. Good policies and procedures around medication help to safeguard the welfare of young people.

All staff have received training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Staff have also received specialist training to meet a range of health and medical needs. Therefore, young people's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate good understanding of facilitating privacy for the young people. This is done sensitively and safely. Details about young people's care is recorded and stored appropriately to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. Young people have access to a private telephone which is free to use for reasonable periods. This ensures that young people's privacy is respected and the payment method is convenient.

All staff have received training on complaints to ensure that they know what to do if there is a complaint about the service. Young people confirm that they know how to make a complaint. Staff have explained the procedure and there is also information in the young people's guide about how to complain. A symbol based communication aid specific to young people's concerns or worries is available in the home. Details of external agencies are displayed clearly. The young people also have the support of an independent advocacy service. The complaints records contain the required details. Therefore, complaints are well handled.

The managers and staff have received child protection training, and the provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. An independent safeguard forum has been established and independent safeguard visitors are employed to report on the young people's safety and welfare. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the young people's safety. Therefore, the welfare of young people is promoted, they are protected from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absence, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

Behaviour management policies and practices have been robustly addressed and revised to ensure that no measure of control is excessive or unreasonable. Staff confirm that they have been supported through this process with additional supervision and training. The additional training includes Therapeutic Crisis Intervention which 'supports staff to respond to both the feelings and behaviour of the young people'. There is ongoing monitoring of behaviour management practices which includes opportunities for staff to be reflective. The records have also been revised to include more details of the differing incremental techniques employed before the last resort of physical restraint is used. Staff are supported by the provision of clearly recorded behaviour management plans. These plans are intensively reviewed by a multi disciplinary team who offer well designed, progressive strategies for staff to implement.

Reducing unnecessary risks to young people is a high priority at the home. Written risk assessments are recorded to enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each young person during their known and likely activities. These are reviewed regularly.

All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire drills. All staff working at the home have received up to date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. The fire safety check records are up to date and accurate. Therefore, young people's physical safety from fire in the home is adequately protected.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. Young people are invited to take part in the recruitment process and their views are seriously considered in the outcome.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive very good individualised support appropriate to their needs. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care and education of young people. The home has links with a wide range of helping agencies, and the provider commissions services to fit the young people's needs. The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have a range of needs arising from diversity.

All staff have received training around equality and diversity. Themed event days are used to promote diversity. School assembly introduces young people to different forms of religion and cultural differences.

A range of community events and visiting speakers promote diversity.

Education and employment is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance. Education at the school is good. Young people learn about diversity through personal health and social education subjects.

There is space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework or learning opportunities. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes. Therefore, the education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood.

An activities coordinator is employed to plan, develop and deliver a programme of events that encourage individual interests, play and activities. Examples highlighted include using a computer, musical instrument playing, cooking, trampoline club, bowling, dance, swimming, seaside trips, meals out, shopping and play zone.

Themed holiday time events are organised, such as prom night and the valentine ball. There is also a good range of books, toys, DVDs and games available for learning and entertainment.

Some young people are registered on a formal Youth Achievement Award scheme which includes leisure activities and learning opportunities. Achievements are externally verified and certificated.

Young people's involvement is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based

activity providers. Therefore, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's referral system has been brought under the control of the registered manager. This enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned, and take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. Additional benefits include improved relationships with parents and better preparation of the young persons living environment in areas such as décor and furniture choice. Admissions to the home are planned and the child or young person, and their family where appropriate are involved in the planning. Young people may visit the home before they move in. Therefore, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Good quality placement plans have been developed. These are supported by the use of Behaviour management plans, communication plans, learning opportunity plans, daily routines, personal care guidelines, contact plans, and leisure plans. The plans are comprehensively written and staff confirm that they know what action is required of them to meet the needs of the young people. The daily records called reflect the content of the care plan and show the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person. These are supplemented by a photograph and description file that documents young people's activities and achievements in each Every Child Matters outcome area. Therefore, young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively, and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met and are implemented.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the children and young people at the home. This system includes participation in the statutory reviews, person centred planning meetings, care management meetings, best interest meetings and multi-disciplinary meetings. Statutory case reviews have taken place within the required timescales. This ensures that the young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. The planning, evidencing and reviewing procedures and practices are a notable area of outstanding strength.

Young people's contact is promoted and facilitated. Young people confirm that they keep in touch with people that are important to them, and that they can have family come to visit them.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. This includes key worker sessions, visits from external agencies and school council meetings. The school council meetings are chaired by an independent advocacy service. Therefore, young people's views are sought and acted upon.

The manager makes every effort to achieve continuity of staffing such that young people's attachments are not overly disrupted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are taught day to day life skills according to their level of maturity and understanding.

They learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, handling money and completing learning opportunities. They are also given guidance and support with social skills, laundry, clothing care and cleaning. Young people can access the organisation's college village to experience adult living and education. Transition planning is promoted and recorded. Staff describe the process as good. Therefore, young people receive care which helps to prepare them for adulthood.

The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. Upgrading and refurbishment work is ongoing. There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The gardens are well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a very good Children's Guide to the statement of purpose. It is available in a variety of formats. Before admission, the staff provide as much information as they can about the home to young people so that they know what to expect if they come to live there.

There is a consistent staff team which has been added to recently to fill vacancies and broaden the range of skills and experience among its members. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Staff supervision is good.

New members of staff receive very good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. The organisation's induction training programme is a notable area of strength. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff's competency to meet the needs of the young people. The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and qualified to meet their needs.

However, the target of 80% of staff having achieved NVQ level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People has not yet been met.

The provider commissions monthly, unannounced monitoring visits to the home. This is to ensure that the care of children can be adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Action points are identified to be followed up by the manager. The manager has established and maintained a good quality system for monitoring and improving the quality of care provided in the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Good approaches to promoting equality and diversity are detailed in all outcome areas.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have the appropriate NVQ level 3 care award or equivalent qualification (NMS 29)